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Continental Cross-Currents: The Influence of Germany on Scottish Theology

David Fergusson

An intellectual commerce of theological ideas, thinkers and movements has characterised the relationship between Germany and Scotland since the middle ages. These are briefly surveyed from medieval scholasticism through the Reformation and the Enlightenment to the present day. Links with Germany have been fostered not only through literary connections but through numerous personal and institutional contacts. These resulted in sustained and multifarious influences which situate the theological traditions of Scotland in close proximity to developments in Germany, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Keywords: Scotland, Germany, Reformation, Luther, Hegel, Barth.

In what follows, I shall explore through a series of brief sketches the cross-currents of theological thought between Scotland and Germany. This is a story that can be traced back until at least the high middle ages and it continues even today, so what is offered is largely selective and illustrative.

Exchanges of ideas are of course international. The study of science, literature, philosophy and religion transcends national boundaries. The mathematics and engineering studied in Edinburgh will not be much different from what is taught in Berlin, New York, Tokyo, Nairobi or Rio de Janeiro. Bridges and aircraft are designed and constructed according to the same principles and from similar materials across the world; if not, then we would not travel abroad with any degree of confidence. We should not allow the necessary stress on context and relativity to prevent us from recognising this obvious fact. Intellectual commerce is not confined to territorial borders any more than other forms of trade. And especially today with quicker and cheaper forms of transport and communication the fruits of research travel the globe more speedily than ever before.

Nevertheless in some disciplines a shared history, context and geographical proximity will inevitably generate intellectual transactions that are peculiarly rich. This is true of European theology over the centuries. The foundation of the great medieval universities, the influence of the Roman church across the continent, and the *lingua franca* of Latin all contributed in the middle ages to a common European intellectual culture. Furthermore, established trade routes enabled relatively easy travel between the east coast of Scotland and the ports of northern Europe. Scots could travel more conveniently by sea to Rotterdam, Hamburg and Danzig than they could by road to London.

The Middle Ages

Until the foundation of the University of St Andrews in 1413, there were no universities in Scotland. Although the monasteries provided some theological training, the best scholars were required to pursue their trade beyond Scotland in northern Europe. Although Richard of St Victor deserves greater attention, the most famous of the Scottish medieval divines was John Duns Scotus, who is believed to have been born in

the town of Duns in Berwickshire around 1266.¹ Our knowledge of Scotus' upbringing and life are sketchy but we know him to have been a Franciscan scholar who taught in Oxford at the beginning of the fourteenth century and thereafter in Paris and Cologne. Scotus was one of the great thinkers of the middle ages; centuries later it could be said that the schools of Europe were divided between the Thomists and the Scotists. His work is exceedingly difficult and quite obscure in places – the pejorative term 'dunce' comes from his followers around 1500 – yet there has been a recent revival of interest in his work, particularly amongst scholars in Oxford and the USA. Against Thomas Aquinas, Scotus insists that some of our concepts apply to God univocally and not merely analogically. In other words, they have the same sense when applied to the Creator as when applied to creatures, although there is a radical difference between infinite and finite being. Yet without univocity of speech, we must lapse into agnosticism, according to Scotus. In addition, he is also characterised as a voluntarist. This refers to his tendency to prioritise the divine will over the divine intellect. Although a highly technical debate, this results in a typically Franciscan emphasis upon the love of God over the knowledge of God. Corresponding to this there is a similar stress upon the freedom of the human will over against its determination by the contents of the mind. Scotus once said that it is more important to love God than to know God. Yet, as Alexander Broadie, has shown, Scotus's position sits somewhere along a spectrum of possible views that are more or less voluntarist. His use of the notion of a formal distinction enables him to distinguish the divine intellect and divine will without ever separating these. To that extent he mediates between extremes. 'We should not lose sight of the fact that realism and nominalism are doctrines on a spectrum, as also are the doctrines of intellectualism and voluntarism. I believe that Scotus performs the wonderfully skilful feat of standing in dynamic equilibrium on the centre point of each spectrum.'²

There are other features of Scotus' work that continue to repay attention. In his political theory there is a development of the notion of popular consent as legitimating political authority, a notion that was to become of increasing significance in later Scottish political thought. The tacit consent of the people is sufficient to establish the authority of a political regime; in other words, you do not require a theory of divine imperial right, hereditary monarchy, or the consent of the Pope to have a legitimate political society. Within his doctrinal theology, there is a development of more speculative ideas surrounding the Blessed Virgin Mary. Scotus is often credited with providing the arguments that led to the doctrine of the immaculate conception – the view that Mary was conceived by her parents free from the stain of original sin, i.e. immaculately. Anselm held the principle that if God could do it and it is appropriate, then we should believe that it happened. This is applied to Mariology by Scotus. Hence he has been characterised also as the *doctor Marianus*.

From all this, we can see why it is difficult to summarise his work. Undoubtedly, Scotus is a European figure of some substance. His work is carried out in the continent; his conversation partners such as Henry of Ghent are all European, and his influence remained for many centuries in all the great teaching centres of the continent. Also known as the *doctor subtilis*, Scotus must be considered one of the greatest of Scottish thinkers though he laboured outside his native land. He died in Cologne in 1308, where he was buried in the church of the Minorites. The inscription on his tomb reads *Scotia*

¹ For an overview Cross, *Duns Scotus*.

² Broadie, *In the Shadow of Scotus*, 47.

me genuit. Anglia me suscepit. Gallia me docuit. Colonia me tenet. (Scotia brought me forth. England sustained me. France taught me. Cologne holds me.) Scotus has heavily influenced the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and also the philosopher Martin Heidegger. He was beatified by the Roman Catholic church as recently as 1993, and his work commended by John Paul II. Canonisation still awaits him. Some recent intellectual genealogies, most notably within radical orthodoxy, have viewed his doctrine of univocity together with his voluntarism as creating a rupture of thought and being. Others, however, dispute this as a selective reading which tends to set him apart from his context and establishes unproven links of entailment between univocity and other doctrines associated with Scotus.³

Another of the great Scottish thinkers of the middle ages was John Mair (1467–1550) who taught at Glasgow, St Andrews and Paris. He was a colleague of Erasmus while amongst his pupils were John Calvin and John Knox. Mair was indebted to Scotus and writes respectfully of him. Born in East Lothian, Mair was educated in Haddington and then Cambridge and Paris. He published a wide range of works in philosophy and theology, a commentary on Matthew's Gospel and an important history of Greater Britain in 1521. He was an opponent of the Lutheran Reformation, arguing against the eucharistic doctrines of the Reformers in his defence of transubstantiation. A contributor to political theory, he espoused conciliarism in the church. The pope, he argued, must be subject to the authority of a general council representative of the church at large. Similarly, his account of political authority followed that of Scotus and Ockham. Kings were not subject to the Pope in their exercise of secular authority. Authority derived from the people who could overturn and replace a tyrant. Here one can detect a Scottish political tradition dating back at least to Scotus. Mair's political work exercised an important influence on political thinking Scotland before, during and after the Reformation. It was also deeply influential in Catholic Spain; Vitoria was his pupil and Suarez quotes him frequently. From this tradition, modern theories of international law emerged.

The Reformation Era

The Reformation reached Scotland relatively late in 1560. Before then, however, Lutheran influences were evident in the work of Patrick Hamilton the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation. An abbot who served in the Scottish highlands, Hamilton registered in Paris in 1520 where he came into contact with the ideas of Erasmus and Luther. Ordained back in Scotland in 1526, he began openly to support the theology of Luther and travelled to Wittenberg and Marburg during the following year. Under the influence of Francis Lambert, he published a short theological work that became known as 'Patrick's Places, a simple and somewhat repetitive work noted for its teaching of justification by faith alone. Returning again to Scotland, he continued to teach the doctrines of the Lutheran Reformation, being eventually tried twice by Cardinal Beaton in St Andrews and burned at the stake in front of St Salvator's College in February, 1528. It was said that 'the reek of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun infected as many as it blew upoun.' One person thus infected was Alexander Alesius (1500–65). Born in Edinburgh and educated in St Andrews, Alesius was originally a skilled opponent of Lutheranism sent to debate with Hamilton. However, he changed his mind and in 1529

³ For further discussion on this point see the symposium in *Modern Theology*, 21.4 (2005), 539–771.

turned against the church in which he had been ordained. Forced into exile, he made his way to Wittenberg where he established contact with Luther and Melanchthon. Thereafter he became a distinguished writer, spending time in Cambridge and London before an enforced return to the continent. Through the influence of Melanchthon, he obtained a professorship at Leipzig where he remained until his death.

Lutheranism also influenced the early liturgical expression of the Reformation in Scotland, particularly through the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* associated with the Wedderburn brothers in Dundee. Although not published until 1565, these were in circulation at an earlier period. The dominant theological influence is that of Martin Luther, many of whose hymns are reflected in the ballads.⁴

Much greater was the influence of Calvin and other Reformed thinkers upon Scottish theology. The Reformation of 1560 created a church that in its foundational documents, polity, doctrine and worship was most recognisably Genevan and Reformed in its orientation. While it embraced many of the themes of the Lutheran Reformation – its doctrine of Scripture, its account of grace and justification, word and sacrament as the marks of the church – the French-Genevan tradition was more immediately significant in the 16th century and thereafter. Here of course the influence of Knox and his associates was decisive. As a consequence, the work of Calvin has always been more influential upon the Scottish theological tradition than that of Luther, despite some notable exceptions to be registered later.

Throughout much of the 17th century, Scottish theology was dominated by the Reformed orthodoxy that was prevalent in much of Europe, particularly the Netherlands after the time of the Arminian controversy. To summarise, Reformed orthodoxy is dominated by the doctrine of double predestination – a doctrine that has found little favour amongst Lutherans – together with the covenant scheme as organising the history of creation and salvation. In the covenant of works (or nature) that God forms a pact with Adam and his descendants, which is broken with the fall in Eden. It is superseded by another covenant, the covenant of grace that is implemented by Christ for the sake of redeeming the elect. This covenant scheme became standard throughout the Reformed world in the 17th century. We find it in all the leading Dutch, Scottish and English Puritan scholars of the period. It is the theology that dominates the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), a confession that has been the subordinate standard of faith for all the Scottish Presbyterian churches for more than three centuries. Yet one interesting feature of this covenant theology is that it may have emerged initially in the Palatinate around the late 16th century, particularly in the work of the Heidelberg scholars, Zacharius Ursinus, a university professor and Casper Olevianus, the court preacher (both were the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563). In relation to the emergence of Reformed orthodoxy, Ursinus and Olevianus are significant for their use of the concept of ‘covenant’ as an organising principle to comprehend the history of creation and salvation. This found its way into the mainstream of 17th century theology in Scotland and is still evident today in the confessional standards of the Kirk.⁵

Harbouring many refugees from other parts of Europe, the Palatinate formed an important centre of Reformed thought at this period. Some of the leading Scottish and English Puritan scholars found their way there in the late 16th and 17th centuries,

⁴ See Murdoch, ‘The Hymns of Martin Luther in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis’, 92–109.

⁵ See Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Thought*.

including John Forbes of Corse who was both renowned and persecuted for his more irenic style of Reformed theology. Forbes was the leading figure in the group known as the Aberdeen doctors.

From the Enlightenment to the 19th Century

Into the 18th century, we reach the era of the Scottish Enlightenment when the influence of Germany was less marked. In general, currents of thought from England were more influential than continental Europe – the philosophy of John Locke and the writings of the Deists provided much of the intellectual hinterland at this time. Nevertheless, we might also view the period as the one in which intellectual exchange was transacted in the reverse direction. Writers such as Adam Smith and David Hume, perhaps the two most distinguished intellectuals of the Scottish Enlightenment, left their mark on German thought. Much notable work has been carried out on Smith by German scholars, including consideration of the so-called Das Adam Smith-Problem, an expression coined by the economist August Oncken in the late 19th century. Das Adam Smith-Problem refers to a perceived tension between Smith's two main works, the *Wealth of Nations* (1776) and the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). According to the principles of the former our economic behaviour will be determined by self-interest, but according to the latter our conduct is to a largely degree regulated by our feelings of sympathy with other human beings. The solution presumably is that self-interest in the *Wealth of Nations* must be read broadly not as narrow selfishness but as including a measure of sympathy and moral sentiment, particularly for our families, friends and immediate neighbours. Yet the precise terms of this resolution continue to attract scholarly attention today.

David Hume's sceptical naturalism also had diverse influences in German intellectual life. His stress on reason as the slave of the passions was attractive to many of the Romantic scholars of the late 18th century, while more famously Kant remarked that it was Hume who aroused him from his dogmatic slumber. What did he mean by this? As someone schooled in rationalist thought, Kant was scandalised by Hume's scepticism regarding our knowledge of the everyday world of sense experience. The older rationalist proofs did not work. Thus, in an effort to provide a more robust account of our knowledge of the world, Kant developed a different (and quite novel) worldview in terms of which knowledge is the result both of the input of sensory experience and also the constructive contribution of the mind. The way the world is reflects the structure we impose upon our experience. For theology this was significant in that the knowledge of God could no longer be attained through speculative means – Kant's work was deflationary and generally agnostic in this respect. Instead religion should be seen as deriving from the experience and practice of the moral life in this world. For this, he claimed, we need belief in freedom, God and in our immortality. This ethical orientation of religion was to become highly influential in later Scottish philosophy and theology. Its anti-speculative and moral character resonated with the culture of Scottish Presbyterianism, providing a useful example of the two-way intellectual traffic between Germany and Scotland.

The sermons of Hugh Blair, minister at St Giles and the first holder of the Chair of Belles-Lettres at the University of Edinburgh, were highly influential throughout the late 18th century and went through several editions in the 19th century. Translated into

German by Schleiermacher, they reveal some affinities with his early work *Speeches on Religion*.

In the initial part of the 19th century, however, there surprisingly little impact was made by German thinkers upon Scottish philosophy and theology despite the stature of philosophers such as Kant and Hegel. There are at least two reasons for this. One is that their work was regarded as heterodox, especially as a time when evangelical theology was in the ascendancy. Hegel, the great idealist philosopher who taught in Berlin in the 1820s, was suspected of espousing pantheism. Furthermore, the Scottish intellectual climate tended to be dominated by the so-called common sense philosophy taught by native scholars such as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. Yet this was slowly to change through the work of later philosophers. In Edinburgh, William Hamilton aroused interest in Kant's philosophy by appropriating many of his arguments and conclusions, and encouraging his pupils to continue his work. At the same time, some of the pillars of the theological establishment revealed their unease at the incursion of new ideas from Germany. Thomas Chalmers, who held the Divinity Chair in Edinburgh and became the leader of the Free Church of Scotland after the Disruption of 1843, counselled his students against reading the German scholars. 'For those who are not inclined to study German philosophy, I do not recommend that they should suspend for it their ordinary readings. Their very ignorance of the German idealism, the very confinement of their mental philosophy to the doctrines and metaphysics of the Scottish school, are guarantees in themselves against the deleterious influence of these outlandish speculations.'⁶ Such words, however, were only likely to encourage a younger generation. If you want to tempt students to read an article or book, then try to censor it.

By the middle of the 19th century, Scottish scholars were studying Hegel with much closer attention and greater sympathy. The first detailed study of his work in English was James Hutchison Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel* (1865). Here Hegel's absolute idealism is expounded enthusiastically, his philosophy being extolled as the moving force of modern Europe. The principles of the mind do not conceal the world of things in themselves but disclose the structure and content of that very world; it has no reality outside its being thought and known to mind (*Geist*). Unfortunately, however, Hutchison Stirling's exposition was less than lucid. In a famous quip, it was remarked by one critic that if he knew the secret of Hegel, he had done a good job at keeping it to himself. It remained for later thinkers to expound Hegelian idealism in Oxford and Glasgow. The Scots, in particular, were heavily involved in the translation of Hegel's work into English.

The most significant Scottish idealist was Edward Caird (1835–1908). In his work, a strong interest in literature, religion and science is apparent. The goal of idealist philosophy is to achieve an understanding of their unity, thus overcoming false dichotomies between subject and object, mind and matter, the individual and the community, and the self and God. The idealists regarded the world as coming to be only through thought. Yet this emergence of the world in the act of knowing is not undertaken separately by a plurality of minds. In our coming to know the universe, we are thinking God's thoughts. There is thus a single absolute that guarantees the

⁶ Quoted by Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica*, 74.

underlying unity of all things; Mind (or Spirit) comes to realise and to know itself in human thought and action. In this way, idealist philosophy articulates the religious intuition of the oneness of the self with God.⁷

In the work of John Caird (1820–98), Professor of Divinity and Principal of the University of Glasgow, we encounter the most significant theological appropriation of idealist philosophy.⁸ The elder brother of Edward, he played an important role in the transformation of Scottish theology and church life in the late Victorian period. His sympathies were catholic, tolerant, open, philosophical, historical, cultured and socially progressive. Like other idealist thinkers, he supported a stronger role for the state in the provision of social welfare and the regulation of the economy to serve human needs. In *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* (1899), he attempts to synthesise the claims of idealist philosophy with standard Christian tenets. Infinite Spirit or Mind constitutes the reality of the external world. We bring to sensation various organising power and principles. Nature must be suffused with the element of thought; its constancy is secured by virtue of an intelligence neither imperfect nor transient in which everything has its being (the standard Berkeleyan solution). This same principle is also applied to finite minds. For Caird, all intellectual and spiritual progress is measured by the extent to which we cease to think our own thoughts and become instead the media for a universal and absolute intelligence (i.e. God). The concept of God requires the existence of a finite world in which the divine fulfils itself. All art, science, morality and religion rest upon a divine ideal which provides the standard of all truth and judgement. By nature God is self-communicative, an idea that Caird locates in the traditional doctrine of the Logos as the one in whom and by whom all things are made. God as subject requires a world as object. Indeed, it is of the essence of God to become incarnate in the world and to draw spiritual beings into the divine life. Yet, attractive though this vision may seem, it was too speculative, overblown and heterodox to have a broad appeal amongst Presbyterian theologians in Scotland.

Perhaps surprisingly, other Scottish theologians of the 19th century emerged were more deeply influenced by Luther. John McLeod Campbell held no academic post and had been deposed from the parish ministry by the General Assembly of 1831. His error was to have preached a theology of the atonement that conflicted with the Westminster Confession. For many years a minister of a small independent congregation in the city centre of Glasgow, he published one of the classics of Scottish theology, *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856). Here he adopts an account of the atonement that stresses the incarnation of the Son of God and the ‘wondrous exchange’ that takes place between God and humanity in the life of Jesus. The stress on the participation and suffering of God in the human condition owes a good deal to Luther’s *Lectures on the Letter to the Galatians*. The index to the recent edition of McLeod Campbell’s work reveals Luther to be the most frequently cited author. It is significant that he appeals back behind the 17th century Reformed tradition to Luther in support of his teaching.

By the second half of the 19th century, most Scottish theologians and biblical scholars studied for a time in one or more of the great German universities. Berlin, Göttingen, Bonn, Tübingen, Heidelberg and Marburg were all regularly visited. The writings of the

⁷ For an account of the background, themes and shifts in Scottish idealism see the introduction to Boucher (ed.) *The Scottish Idealists: Selected Writings*, 1–22. See also Fergusson, ‘Scottish Idealism’, 270–296.

⁸ Caird’s work is attractively profiled in Cheyne, *Studies in Scottish Church History*, 165–184.

professors encountered in these centres of study recur in the work of subsequent Scottish thinkers. For the last 150 years, virtually all the significant figures in the Scottish Divinity Faculties have undertaken some training in Germany or Switzerland. Throughout this period, moreover, the appearance of much German theology and biblical interpretation has been the result of translational work undertaken by Scottish scholars who acquired German while studying on the continent. This translational corpus includes key works of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann and later Bultmann and Barth.

Three further illustrations of Germanic influence from this time can be cited. First, there was the impact of biblical criticism upon the Free Church scholars in Victorian Scotland. This came relatively late to Scotland but when it arrived it aroused a furious national controversy in the 1870s. Here the trigger was the appearance of an article on the Bible by William Robertson Smith in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (9th edition). A former student at New College in Edinburgh, Smith had studied in Germany under Rothe and Ritschl before his appointment to the Chair of Hebrew in the Free Church College at Aberdeen. Smith had been influenced in particular by his friendship with Julius Wellhausen, a pioneer Old Testament critic in Göttingen. In the famous article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Smith expounds views that were already being developed by Wellhausen and others in Germany. He argued, for example, that the Pentateuch was a composite work reflecting different periods in the history of Israel, i.e. it was not the work of Moses. The books of the law, he claimed, were later than those of the 8th century prophets who provided the well-spring of Hebrew religion. Similarly the gospels were judged not to be first-hand accounts of eye-witnesses but works that had been shaped by the traditions of early Christianity. This led to an intense debate within the courts of the church over whether Robertson Smith, in expounding such views, was a suitable person to teach candidates for the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland. His case was widely discussed at public meetings, in pamphlets and in the national press. Ironically in seeking to suppress his views, his opponents merely provided them with the oxygen of publicity. Smith was eventually removed from his teaching post in Aberdeen by the General Assembly of the Free Church in 1881; he went on to undertake pioneer work on the social scientific study of religion in Cambridge where he became Professor of Arabic. His own career had been adversely affected by the storm of controversy but continental methods of biblical criticism had arrived to stay in Scotland. In defending his position, Smith appealed to a more Lutheran understanding of the authority of Scripture, perhaps derived from his reading of Richard Rothe in Germany. By virtue of its function as witness to the revelation of God in history, the Bible derives its authoritative status. This character of ‘witness’ is why Scripture become the supreme rule of faith and life in the church, as opposed to any inherent property of inerrancy or act verbal dictation by the Holy Spirit to its authors.⁹

A second illustration is provided by the influence of German kenotic christology in Scotland. Kenosis refers to the self-emptying of God in Christ. The kenoticists of the 19th century, particularly Thomasius (who taught in Erlangen) and Gess (Breslau and Göttingen) had sought to reconcile our historical understanding of the person of Jesus with the traditional dogma of his divinity by recourse to the notion of *kenosis*, a concept that had already been used in earlier Lutheran christology. According to Thomasius and Gess, in becoming human, Christ divested himself of features of his divinity – he

⁹ See Rogerson, *The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain*.

emptied himself of his divine metaphysical powers. This approach to christology, albeit with various modifications and refinements, was to command the field in the English-speaking world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Its two most famous Scottish exponents were A. B. Bruce in Glasgow and H. R. Mackintosh in Edinburgh.

Third, mention should be made of the impact of Ritschl and liberal theology upon Scotland. A professor in Göttingen, Ritschl was regarded as a the father figure of the liberal school, a movement that tended to eschew metaphysical speculation in favour of the historical study of Bible and religion and an ethical approach to theology. What we encounter in Scotland is generally a positive but cautious reception of liberalism. Its concern with the historical and ethical are affirmed but allied with a reinterpretation of classical Christian doctrine. The more radical tendencies of liberalism in the early twentieth century are less apparent in Scottish theological culture. Mackintosh did a very great deal throughout his career to promote an informed reception of German theology in his native land. His last book, published posthumously in 1937, on *Types of Modern Theology* drew attention not only to the work of Hegel, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, but to the emerging thought of Karl Barth still in its early period. Not the least of Mackintosh's many achievements was to establish with his friend Karl Heim, the annual exchange between New College in Edinburgh and the Evangelische Stift in Tübingen, involving typically two students from each institution. Apart from an interruption on account of the war, this has proved a lasting and useful contribution in promoting intellectual exchange, forming friendships and furthering the cause of Christian unity.

The 20th Century

The two most significant Scottish theologians of the mid-twentieth century were the brothers John and Donald Baillie. Born into the Free Church Manse in Gairloch in the West Highlands, they both studied in Edinburgh before spending a year time in several German universities, including Marburg where they encountered Wilhelm Herrmann, a theologian who combined liberal scholarship and Christian piety in his teaching and writing. While in Germany, John Baillie wrote a lecture on student life there. It receives a mixed reception. He regards the German educational system as the most highly developed in the world, but seems to find student life to be rather aimless and indolent. 'The boy who leaves the German school is usually a shy and retiring youth with a badly-developed figure – but he knows as much as many a Scotch student knows when he is capped Master of Arts... He has hardly played a game, or had a spare moment to himself. As sure as he worked hard before, he now ceases to do a stroke of work.'¹⁰

Much influenced by Herrmann, the Baillies offered an attractive brand of liberal evangelicalism in their own writings. Donald Baillie's *God Was in Christ* (1948) became one of the leading texts on christology and much of this study involves an interaction with German biblical scholarship. Similarly, John Baillie's more philosophical work shows him engaging with contemporaries such as Bultmann, Barth and Brunner. Before returning to Edinburgh in 1934, John Baillie taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York where one of his pupils was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Although Baillie's teaching appears not to have impressed the young Bonhoeffer, they remained in contact during the years of the German church struggle. It seems that

¹⁰ Cited by Newlands, *John and Donald Baillie: A Transatlantic Theology*, 38.

Bonhoeffer stayed with Baillie at his home in Whitehouse Terrace when visiting Scotland in 1935. Baillie's key epistemological concept of 'mediated immediacy' was an attempt to show how a sense of the presence of God permeated our awareness of the natural world, other people and the Christian story.¹¹ The presence of God is 'in, with and under' these other presences that characterise our lives. Drawing upon this Lutheran notion, he attempts to hold together the centrality of Christ with the ways in which God is apprehended outside the reach of the church.

In the second half of the twentieth century, there are three Germanic thinkers who have exercised an obvious influence within Scottish theology, each with strong personal links to the country. These are Rudolf Bultmann, the Marburg theologian and New Testament scholar, Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian who taught in Germany until his expulsion in 1934 for refusing the oath of loyalty to Hitler, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed by the SS at Flössenburg in 1945. All three were members of the Confessing Church, and in the case of Karl Barth one of the authors of the Barmen Declaration. Their works are widely available in English translation and, especially in the case of Barth and Bonhoeffer, they continue today to be studied in the English-speaking world. The theology of Bultmann and Bonhoeffer was perhaps most influential in Glasgow in the 1950s and 60s. A group of thinkers – Ian Henderson, Ronald Gregor Smith and John Macquarrie – contributed to the reception of their work. Henderson wrote on the demythologising controversy sparked by Bultmann's famous essay on the New Testament and mythology. Gregor Smith discussed Bonhoeffer's ideal of a secular Christianity in his prison writings, and Macquarrie offered a critical analysis of the use of Heidegger's philosophy in the New Testament interpretation of Bultmann. Macquarrie went on to become the co-translator of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Some German students have remarked that they understood Heidegger better in the English translation than in the original.

In Edinburgh, by contrast, the influence of Karl Barth was more evident particularly in the continued commitment to the teaching of Reformed doctrine. Norman Porteous was Barth's first English-speaking student, having studied under him in Münster in the late 1920s. And in the work of Thomas F Torrance who held the Chair of Christian Dogmatics from 1952–78, Barth's theology was enthusiastically received and disseminated. Torrance studied under Barth in Basel before the outbreak of war and thereafter supervised with Geoffrey Bromiley the English translation of the *Church Dogmatics*. In two of his own books, he provides a sustained and creative study of Barth's work.¹² Both Barth and Bultmann delivered the Gifford Lectures in Scotland and received honorary degrees in Glasgow and St Andrews respectively. Bonhoeffer was invited to deliver the Croall Lectures in Edinburgh but was prevented from doing so by his imprisonment and execution.

Conclusion

This brief tour of several centuries of European theology reveals the many and varied cross-currents of thought between Germany and Scotland. In some respects, this positions the Scottish theological tradition more within the European mainstream than its Anglican counterpart. Theology in Scotland has unquestionably been enriched by its links with the continent. Yet it has also to be recognised that there has been a recent

¹¹ See Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*.

¹² Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology 1910–3*; and *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*.

shift of theological gravity over the past generation from Germany to the USA. With its stronger culture of church attendance and the economic strength of its seminaries and universities, the USA has become a dominant centre of theological activity. In some ways, this makes it too easy for scholars in the UK, given our shared language. We gravitate naturally to conferences, institutions and publishing houses in North America, neglecting work in continental Europe. And at the same time, we have also been conscious of the emergence of churches and theologies in other parts of the world outside the west and of the consequent danger of adopting a narrow eurocentrism in the problems and agendas that preoccupy us.

Nevertheless, it would be to the detriment of theology and church life in Scotland if we failed to maintain our links with Europe where high standards of scholarship are preserved, where much of our history lies, and to which our local context is much indebted. The next generation requires to maintain the flow of students between our countries, to promote the study of theological German in Scottish institutions, and to cultivate those links that hitherto have been to our mutual enrichment and advantage. Theology always should attend to its local context, its history and traditions. In Scotland, that requires an appreciation of longstanding links with Germany.¹³

Notes on Contributor

David Fergusson is Professor of Divinity and Principal of New College at the University of Edinburgh. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He has authored and edited works on the history of Scottish theology, and is a director of *The Scottish Journal of Theology*. His most recent book is *Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

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¹³ This essay is based on a lecture that was delivered in 2007 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Deutschsprachige Evangelische Gemeinde in Edinburgh.

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